



**Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

---

Shirley, DG (2018) Stanislavski's System and the Director's Art in the Twenty First Century. In: The Great Stage Directors: Stanislavski, Antoine, Saint Denis. The Great European Stage Directors Set 1, 1 . Bloomsbury Books. ISBN 9781474254113

---

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/618615/>

**Version:** Accepted Version

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury Books

Please cite the published version

<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk>

## **Chapter Five**

### **Stanislavski and Contemporary Directing Practice**

**David Shirley**

Konstantin Stanislavski is described by Bella Merlin as “the father of contemporary acting practice.”<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of the conventions and aesthetics that are associated with theatrical realism. A staple feature on the curricula of drama and performance-related courses at schools, universities, colleges, and drama schools throughout the world, Stanislavski’s System and the techniques associated with it provide the luminescent foundations on which most Westernized approaches to actor-training are established. Indeed, his very name has become synonymous with the actor’s craft.

But what of the director’s craft? To what extent is it possible to trace the influence of Stanislavski’s methods on contemporary directing practice? Although much has been written about his own work as a director,<sup>2</sup> there is surprisingly little coverage on the ways in which Stanislavski’s work has helped to shape the creative practice of contemporary professional theatre directors.

This chapter will examine Stanislavski’s impact on contemporary understandings of the role of the director through an investigation of the production histories, rehearsal practice, and interpretative techniques of three outstanding yet individually distinctive theatre directors: Max Stafford-Clark, Declan Donnellan, and Katie Mitchell. The discussion will assess how different approaches to and interpretations/derivations of Stanislavski’s approach have served to shape the creative techniques of three particularly influential British directors working into the early part of the twenty-first century. Revealingly, in the case of each director, the interpretative approach highlights a particular aspect of Stanislavski’s approach: Stafford-Clark focuses on the importance of an ensemble-based approach to realist productions; Donnellan has developed a series of experiential rehearsal techniques in his interpretation of the classics; Mitchell’s highly exploratory approach foregrounds the importance of rethinking the physical connection to emotions.

The choice of directors reflects a desire to focus on traditional as well as innovative approaches to theatre directing in both classical and contemporary work. Whereas Stafford-Clark, for instance, has devoted much of his career to developing

and staging new plays by writers such as Caryl Churchill, David Hare, Howard Brenton, and Andrea Dunbar, Donnellan has established an international reputation for the innovative freshness with which he has approached the staging and re-interpretation of a wide range of classical texts including works by Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, and Sophocles. In contrast to both of her contemporaries, Mitchell's work often embraces new technologies and mediatized forms as a means of prompting new ways of experiencing innovative contemporary material by writers such as Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp, and Simon Stephens, as well as forging ingenious ways of engaging with canonical works by Chekhov and Strindberg. While each director fully acknowledges the importance of Stanislavski, the degree to which his influence is traceable in their work is variable.

### **Ensembles and realism**

It goes almost without saying that one of the key tenets of Stanislavski's vision for a new kind of theatre was his emphasis on the need to establish an acting ensemble with a shared ethos. As Vasily Osipovich Toporkov summarizes: "Our art is an ensemble art. Brilliant individual actors in a show are not enough. We have to think of a performance as a harmonious union of all elements into a single artistic creation."<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus on individual actors or stars, Stanislavski advanced a more cohesive and collaborative approach to theatre in which the company sought to find truthful and meaningful connections to the situations and environments presented by the playwright. While many aspects of Stanislavski's early approach to theatre evolved and changed as he matured, this commitment to the notion of an ensemble remained constant throughout his life.

Max Stafford-Clark's own interpretative techniques appear to have developed and expanded Stanislavski's ideas on the importance of the ensemble. He began his directing career at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 1966. Following his appointment to the role of artistic director of the company in 1968, and having led the Traverse Theatre Workshop for five years, he co-founded the Joint Stock Theatre Group with fellow director Bill Gaskill, producer David Aukin, and playwright David Hare. Primarily concerned with the staging of new plays, this company adopted a highly experimental, workshop/research-driven approach to rehearsals in which director, writer, and actors collaborated in the generation and production of original scripted material – often from new and unknown writers. Bill Gaskill explains: "A

dream we all had, this wonderful thing of a great permanent company, long rehearsal periods [...] If you want to rehearse a play three or four months, you ought to be able to, and not be under pressure to do one every six or seven weeks [...] To create new work you need a different nursery.”<sup>4</sup>

The theatre directed by Stafford-Clark during this period includes politically inflected work by leading playwrights such as *Fanshen* by David Hare in 1975, *Epsom Downs* by Howard Brenton in 1977, and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* in 1976 and *Cloud Nine* in 1979, both by Caryl Churchill. In 1979, Stafford-Clark was appointed to the role of Artistic Director of London’s Royal Court Theatre, where he remained for fourteen years. Once again, his passion for new writing and commitment to a collaborative approach to rehearsal heralded in some of the most innovative and ground-breaking productions of the 1980s and 1990s, including two further major plays by Churchill, *Top Girls* in 1982 and *Serious Money* in 1987.<sup>5</sup>

Although each of the contemporary directors in this study acknowledges the benefits of working within an ensemble system, Stafford-Clark, throughout his career, has sought, uniquely, to develop an approach that encompasses both Stanislavski’s emphasis on unity and detail as well as Brecht’s ideological and political perspectives. Indeed, it is possibly his interest in the latter that has fueled his longstanding commitment to new writing.<sup>6</sup>

Noted for his careful nurturing of original works by socially aware and often politically motivated writers, Stafford-Clark is also mindful of the need for methodological specificity: “The first lesson I learnt from the Court [was] that the ‘standard’ of the ‘work’ was the important criterion and that this led to the meticulous examination of every detail of the production.”<sup>7</sup>

Upon leaving the Royal Court in 1993, he collaborated with theatrical producer Sonia Freedman to establish Out of Joint Theatre Company, which continued Stafford-Clark’s approach in both Joint Stock and aspects of his Royal Court work. Examples of the many highly acclaimed productions which Stafford-Clark has directed for the company include his 1997 staging of *The Positive Hour* by April De Angelis and the verbatim-inspired *Talking to Terrorists* by Robin Soans in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

Although the prevailing economic conditions in which British theatre operates has prevented him from establishing a permanent company along lines similar to

those of either the Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT) or the Berliner Ensemble,<sup>9</sup> Stafford-Clark's aspirations and vision as a director remain just as compelling:

On the few occasions when I have been able to work with a more permanent ensemble of actors and when, either by accident or by design, there has been a genuine effort to share power and responsibility, it has created the best working conditions I've known. And this in turn has led to the best work. Theatre is a collaborative act and, when the conditions for true collaboration can be created, theatre hits its most thrilling potential.<sup>10</sup>

The clearest, most detailed account of Stafford-Clark's working methods can be found in the collection of letters that he produced during 1988 rehearsals for *The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar and *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. *Letters to George: A Director's Handbook of Techniques* (1989) offers an intriguing insight into the imaginative collaboration, that has become his hallmark. Alongside his commitment to an ensemble, his work with actors is strikingly derivative of Stanislavski's System. Following prolonged periods of work "round a rehearsal room table,"<sup>11</sup> where the company identify and agree "objectives" and "actions,"<sup>12</sup> scenes are read, tested, and re-tested in order to piece together a framework in which to understand the structure of the play as a whole. Nigel Terry explains:

You break the whole thing into sections, and you use transitive verbs on every single act and action. [...] And this would go on for quite a while. Max doesn't get you on your feet until you've gone through that process, reading it, saying the actions, changing them. It's a flexible thing, but it gives you the framework, the structure which is malleable.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than adopt an autocratic approach to rehearsal, Stafford-Clark provides plenty of opportunities for creative input and insight from actors, who are invited to undertake research into the background to the play, the characters, and the political and social milieu in which the action is situated. Wary of assuming an overly "academic" or "theoretical" approach to rehearsals, the cast members are encouraged to embody their findings through hot-seating exercises, improvisations and interactive games to build relationships and free the imagination. In this way, Stafford-Clark enables the collaborative ethos he favors and encourages a shared ownership of the

aforementioned “power and responsibility” involved in production. Importantly, for Stafford-Clark, the writer is often at the centre of this process, which can start with a workshop period before formal rehearsals begin.

Although, Stafford-Clark makes it clear that each play brings different demands and, therefore, requires different responses from the director, the use of an initial workshop period at the commencement of rehearsals has become fairly standard. Designed to provide the launch pad from which the company’s work will develop, this aspect of the work has been defined by Stafford-Clark as follows: “A workshop isn’t actually a rehearsal, nor is it a journalistic investigation, nor is it academic research and yet it contains elements of all three of these. Part of the function is to familiarize and brief the actors, who are together for the first time.”<sup>14</sup>

With new writing very much a part of his oeuvre as a director, the workshop also provides a stimulus for the playwright.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, Stafford-Clark makes extensive use of factual materials – e.g. historical texts and eye-witness testimonies – as vehicles through which to enter the world depicted in the play.<sup>16</sup> He insists that information thus gathered is embodied by and absorbed into the behaviour of the actors. For instance, having read and studied Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851) as part of the workshop process for *Our Country’s Good*, cast member Mark Lambert translated his findings into physical action and could explain and demonstrate a lock-picking burglary in detail.<sup>17</sup>

Like Stanislavski, Stafford-Clark uses terms such as “actions” and “objectives” through which to identify character motivations and impulses at different stages of the drama. An excellent example is in his directorial notes of the encounter between Silvia and Kite in Act III Sc. 2 (lines 196–222) of George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer*. The list of transitive verbs added to each line of text gives a fascinating insight to the adversarial relationship that is played out between Sergeant Kite and the daughter of the local Justice, Silvia, who is actually disguised as a man:

**Kite** Befriends

**Silvia** Distances

**Kite** Pleases

**Silvia** Amuses

**Kite** Intrigues

**Silvia** Fears

**Kite** Flatters, Pressures  
**Silvia** Discourages  
**Kite** Binds  
**Silvia** Mollifies  
**Kite** Praises, Encourages, Reassures, Binds  
**Silvia** Cheers  
**Kite** Alerts, Warns, Focuses  
**Silvia** Diverts<sup>18</sup>

Even without Farquhar's dialogue, the sense of responsiveness captured in the pattern of transitive verbs helps to promote a Stanislavskian sense of communion between each of the actors involved. For Stanislavski, the actor must always be in contact with the other actor, not an imagined character. As Stanislavski writes: "It is agony to play opposite actors who look at you and see someone else and adapt to him, not you. A wall separates them from those with whom they should be in direct communication [...] Beware of this, it is dangerous, murderous and crippling."<sup>19</sup>

Clearly aware of the dangers of imposition or of being overly prescriptive, Stafford-Clark remains constantly alert to the need to shift and change interpretation in accordance with how the actors actually play the scene:

Having road-tested the actions, we were then in a position to amend and correct them. Obviously it's no good saying 'Kite charms Wilful' if, in fact, his instincts take him in another direction as soon as he acts it [...] Working with agreed actions means that each actor knows and subscribes to a particular shape to the scene. It [...] shouldn't be treated as a rigid working method, but it does establish a common language.<sup>20</sup>

Stafford-Clark encourages actors to go out and meet real people who have experiences that are either analogous or equivalent to those of the characters in the play. During the workshop period for *Our Country's Good*, cast members Alphonsia Emmanuel and Linda Bassett met with Rosie, a former inmate of Holloway Prison, to try to understand more fully the pathway to criminality. When it came to sharing this research, the results proved invaluable to the entire company, including Timberlake Wertenbaker, who was working on the script:

They sat facing a semi-circle of the rest of us and re-enacted their interview. [...] Thus their research was fed to Timberlake [...] it was very successful. Both actresses hit on the same personality: perky, London, sharp and bright and, in the course of an hour-long improvisation, came up with an astonishing amount of detail.<sup>21</sup>

The “round a rehearsal room table” approach to the workshop elements of Stafford-Clark’s methodology – in which research, observation, and embodiment serve to nourish a sense of authenticity in the work – is strongly reminiscent of Vasili Toporkov’s experience of playing Vanechka, a bank cashier, in Stanislavski’s 1928 production of Valentin Kataev’s play *The Embezzlers*.<sup>22</sup> Somewhat frustrated with Toporkov’s tendency to focus almost exclusively on how best to deliver each line, Stanislavski took the text away from him and forced him to focus on action as a means of deepening his understanding of the character.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout his career, Stafford-Clark, like Stanislavski, has been noted for the levels of rigor and detail that he brings to the rehearsal room. In recent years, this has been further evidenced by his involvement with verbatim theatre. Notable examples include *The Permanent Way* by David Hare in 2003, and *Talking to Terrorists* by Robin Soans in 2005. Unlike other forms of verbatim theatre, which often record and reproduce the live testimonies of those interviewed, in both of these instances Stafford-Clark adopted a more flexible approach that allowed for greater degrees of creative freedom for the actors, the writer, and the director. Instead of functioning simply as reporters, the performers in each of these productions assumed the roles of actor-researchers or “hunter-gathers,” as David Hare<sup>24</sup> liked to refer to them, undertaking interviews, collecting information, and then presenting their findings to the company.

Like Stafford-Clark’s new writing projects at the Royal Court and with Out of Joint, the format through which actors fed back to the rest of the company was usually that of a hot-seat exercise, in which the actors *inhabited* the personas of those with whom they conducted interviews. Importantly, though, as Bella Merlin makes clear, mere physical characterization was not the primary goal of these sessions: “It is important to note that Stafford-Clark’s requisite for the feeding back of interviews [...] was not that the actors should *impersonate* their subjects. Rather they were to ‘embody the spirit’ of the interviewees.”<sup>25</sup> For Bella Merlin, who undertook the role



of the Bereaved Mother in *The Permanent Way*, which was based on her interviews with actual people involved in the tragedy, this entailed not just reflecting “physical, gestural vocabulary” but also “accessing the counterpoint between physical containment and psychological anger.”<sup>26</sup>

While it has been argued that Stanislavski’s approach does not entirely fit with the aims of presenting the behaviours and thoughts of the real people represented in verbatim plays as opposed to dramatic characters of fictional drama,<sup>27</sup> there are two things that are particularly noteworthy in Merlin’s description of drawing on an interview. The first is the extent to which she begins to incorporate into her own psyche the atmosphere she encounters in the room with the grieving mother. The second is her sensitivity to what Stanislavski describes as the “given circumstances.”

Perhaps the nearest that Stanislavski ever comes to talking about representing real people rather than imagined characters is in *An Actor’s Work on a Role*, when he itemizes the kind of preparation that needs to be done if an actor is to undertake the role of Antonio Salieri in Alexander Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri* (1831). He writes that “the imagination sketches out the character’s entire life that creates the atmosphere that shapes (forms and develops) the heart of the role.”<sup>28</sup> The resemblance between the levels of detail that Stanislavski outlines in this section and Stafford-Clark’s approach is evident – particularly in relation to Merlin’s emphasis on the importance of the “given circumstances,” which provides the perfect illustration of Stanislavskian technique in action.

The fact that the event itself and the person Merlin interviews are real rather than imagined does not undermine the force of Stanislavski’s approach; if anything, it can serve to sharpen their effect. As can be seen from Torstov’s response to an irritated Grisha, in *An Actor’s Work*, he suggests that an over-dependence on the “given circumstances” and “what ifs” leaves the actor with “trifles.”

“What do you mean trifles?” Torstov turned on him. “To believe in another person’s thoughts and genuinely live them – you call that a trifle? Don’t you know that creating on someone else’s idea is infinitely more difficult than making up a story of your own? [...] We establish our relationships to people and the circumstances of their lives [...] We become bound to it, we live in it psychologically and physically. We produce ‘the truth of the passions’ in ourselves.”<sup>29</sup>

In the context of Stafford-Clark's work, Richard Eyre's comments in response to *The Permanent Way*, and to documentary/verbatim theatre more generally, also prove revealing:

The desire to make that experience of simulated reality more "real," more like life as it is rather than how it's supposed to be, is the motor of modern theatre. [...] The obligation of actors playing real people to honour their subjects leads to a naturalness and transparency that has the effect of making performances in plays not based on real events seem insincere. Given a rise in the currency of documentary theatre, a new gauge of naturalness will be set.<sup>30</sup>

Whether staging classical material, working with new writers, or developing verbatim pieces, Stafford-Clark has consistently sought an extremely high degree of authenticity, through detail and rigor in his work. His methodology as a director – the emphasis on an ensemble ethos, the intense table-work, the use of actions and objectives, the improvisatory approach and the physical/spiritual approach to embodied representations by actor-researchers – whether consciously or otherwise – has been heavily influenced by many of Stanislavski's key principles. Stafford-Clark's commitment to a new form of realism and his extremely rigorous approach to workshops and rehearsals locates him as a leading proponent of what he himself has described as the *Méthode Stanislavskoïse*.<sup>31</sup>

### **An experiential approach to the classics**

If the foundations of Stanislavski's principles are clearly traceable in many of the methodologies adopted by Max Stafford-Clark, the same is not true of the work of Declan Donnellan. Together with Nick Ormerod, his theatre designer partner, Donnellan founded the internationally acclaimed Cheek By Jowl in 1981. Initially conceived as a touring ensemble, the company gained an international reputation for presenting innovative, stylish and highly intelligent classical productions including works by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Webster, Racine, and Chekhov. An Associate Director of the National Theatre between 1989 and 1998, Donnellan also directed for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).<sup>32</sup>

In 1997, he directed a Russian translation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* at the Maly Theatre in St Petersburg and in 2000, he was invited to direct Alexander Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* at the Moscow Art Theatre. In 1999, Donnellan and Ormerod accepted an invitation from the Russian Theatre Confederation, to form a permanent company of Russian actors. Described as the "sister company" of Cheek by Jowl, this group, based in Moscow, undertakes both national and international tours of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. A recipient of numerous accolades, including five Laurence Olivier Awards,<sup>33</sup> Donnellan ranks among Europe's most dynamic and gifted directors.

Acknowledging the profound influence of Peter Brook, whose work, he believes, "encompasses the poles of the spiritual and the vulgar,"<sup>34</sup> Donnellan also recalls regular visits, as a teenager, to performances at the RSC and the Royal Court. Comparing his role as a director to that of a "coach," for whom the actor "is the athlete," Donnellan is nevertheless wary of finding himself encumbered by "rules."<sup>35</sup>

The notion that a director creates "rules" is notoriously problematic, but clearly I impose rules, though what I impose I see emerging from the grass-roots, from the actors themselves [...] whenever we seem to be faced with a choice between telling the truth or obeying the rule, we should always choose to break the rule.<sup>36</sup>

While he fully acknowledges the immense importance of Stanislavski's legacy, he stops short of discussing his work in terms of the efficacy or otherwise of prescribed methodologies, in preference for a freer and more philosophical understanding.

I think people are touched by Stanislavski's extraordinary struggle to help life flow on stage. Very often people are much more inspired, I have to tell you, by *My Life in Art* which is completely exercise free! It's more to do with the spirit [...] It's the spirit of Stanislavski: that's what's so important about him as far as I am concerned.<sup>37</sup>

Donnellan suggests that there is an "invisible quality," a kind of "collision" of experiences that occurs, through which we encounter Stanislavski's vision.<sup>38</sup> For

Donnellan, the “context and space” in which our work is situated is most important – as was the case for Stanislavski. “Words,” he argues, “don’t work” when it comes to attempts to describe, theorize or fix Stanislavski’s methods. Mindful of the fact that Stanislavski frequently changed his mind, Donnellan is suspicious of what he describes as “Stanislavskian fundamentalism,” preferring to use his “own lights” as the means by which to connect with the latter’s work. “It is Stanislavski’s spirit that has influenced me, not the facts.”<sup>39</sup>

Donnellan’s focus as a director is aimed at watching and reacting to the live presence of actors in rehearsal and during the moment of performance. Indeed, it is the determination “to recreate the living experience as opposed to blocking it,” or to “organize the conditions under which life might be more likely to arise”<sup>40</sup> that forms part of Donnellan’s *raison d’être* as a director.

Closely aligned to this notion of liveness and spontaneity in his work is his commitment to an ensemble ethos – something he shares with both Stanislavski and Stafford-Clark. Donnellan explains: “The sense of belonging, or of wanting to belong, is fundamental to my understanding of live performance; playmaking is essentially a shared experience [...] There is something both beautiful and healing about the collective creative process of theatre, and nothing is more crushing than watching a play which has been stifled of life.”<sup>41</sup> Actors feel valued and empowered in their work. “Those in the smallest roles are as important as those in the biggest,” Donnellan suggests, “in a way it is romantically Socialist – everybody is respected.”<sup>42</sup>

While Donnellan clearly values the importance of research as a means of freeing the creative imagination and empowering rehearsals, in sharp contrast to Stanislavski and Stafford-Clark, he stops short of extended periods of “table-work.”<sup>43</sup> It is very much this actor-centred approach addressed to the “recognition of life through the operation of spontaneity” that serves to distinguish Donnellan from many of his contemporaries, including the other directors discussed in this chapter. The search for genuine spontaneity, emerging from the actor’s impulse, is of paramount importance in his rehearsal room. Part of his role as a director, he believes, is “to guide and lead the actor’s impulse towards the spiritual, philosophical and political places in which the play takes place.”<sup>44</sup> He is aware that, for various reasons, actors often find that their creativity becomes blocked – as a result of anxiety or nerves, as a consequence of the fixed application of prescribed working methodologies, or simply as a result of external factors related to the environment of the rehearsal space itself.

These issues are examined in some detail in Donnellan own book, *The Actor and the Target*, originally published in Russian in 2000. At one level, the book is a clear articulation of Donnellan's actor-centred approach to directing in which he sets out to identify and find solutions to the various hazards that can "block" creative freedom and spontaneity. At another, it can be read in favor of the more "defined" and "detailed" work he has encountered during his experiences of observing and working extensively with Russian actors. Donnellan explains: "I've always been fascinated by watching actors play scenes. I loathe mannered acting, and love Russian actors for the definition of their performance. Russian companies take the tradition of acting even more seriously than the British."<sup>45</sup>

Donnellan does put forward a theory of acting in *The Actor and the Target* that stresses the need for the actor to focus attention and energy towards a specific "target" that is always outside of the self. He explains: "The target can be real or imaginary, concrete or abstract [...] but at all times and without exception there must be a target."<sup>46</sup>

Although, in many respects, the book rejects the introspective approaches to acting that are commonly associated with Lee Strasberg, Donnellan's emphasis on behaviourism and the need to recognize and respond to the energy present in the surrounding environment strikes a chord that is not dissimilar to the work of Sanford Meisner. Like Meisner, Donnellan's emphasizes the importance of spontaneity in rehearsal and performance, and as a result he conceptualizes alternative approaches to our understanding of character. For Donnellan, attempts to transform are futile, and he explains:

A crucial thing to remember about character is the simplest: the actor cannot actually transform. This seems more obvious than it is. Sometimes actors punish themselves because they have not achieved a "transformation." But the quest for transformation is as vain as the quest for perfection. It is important to knock the idea of transformation square on the head. We cannot change ourselves and we cannot transform ourselves. We are still, only the target moves.<sup>47</sup>

At this point it is worth pausing to note the sharp distinction between this approach to an actor's craft and that advocated by Stanislavski, who asserted that "all actors, without exception, create characters and transform themselves physically."<sup>48</sup>

Does Donnellan's resistance to transformation and his contention that there "is no such thing as a character" bring him into direct conflict with Stanislavski, who states unequivocally that there "are no non-character parts"?<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to consider the extent to which both the evolution and dissemination of Stanislavski's work in Europe and the United States has led to different approaches and interpretations, which, though not mutually exclusive, are far from homogeneous. In part, this is a reflection of Stanislavski's constant need to adapt and refine his theories, on the basis of the new insights and discoveries emerging through his practice as an actor, director, and teacher. Jean Benedetti expresses the point succinctly: "A notion of a fixed, once-for-all text is entirely alien to [his] spirit of enquiry and research."<sup>50</sup> In many respects, the highly piecemeal transmission of Stanislavski's principles, outside of the context from which they emerged, has been subject to the vicissitudes and nuances of the various social, cultural, and artistic environments that have absorbed them.<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps one way of reconciling the apparent difference between Donnellan's approach and that of Stanislavski is to consider how different interpretations of the latter's work have produced multifarious approaches to the interpretation of character. Vladimir Mirodan outlines three possible approaches to Stanislavskian characterization:

- An emphasis on the effectiveness of *action breakdown* into objectives or tasks (*zadachi* in Russian)
- A rejection of the emphasis on analysis and cerebral dissection and reliance on moment-by-moment *experiencing through intuition* to create the effect of randomness.
- A third approach, which requires certain decisions to be made *a priori*, through inferences from the data of the play.<sup>52</sup>

Although Mirodan contextualizes these approaches in accordance with his overriding thesis, his articulation of the different conceptualizations of Stanislavskian approach proves invaluable when seeking to reconcile the seemingly contradictory nature of

Donnellan's views. Whereas the first example helps to define the model adopted by practitioners such as Max Stafford-Clark, the second is much closer in spirit to that of Donnellan. The disavowal of notions of "character transformation" – which informs much of his writing – as well as his resistance to the largely cerebral activities associated with "table-work" are set in contrast to a preference for the intuitive, spontaneous and live responsiveness which his book advocates. Interestingly, the third model is highly reflective of Michel Saint-Denis's approach to actor training in which character transformation is grounded by a psycho-physical interpretation of Stanislavski's legacy, and is closely aligned to the "Method of Physical Actions."

While Donnellan's resistance to the notion of character transformation may well be rooted in a desire to avoid "mannered acting"<sup>53</sup> or his conviction that "when we concentrate on changing ourselves, we end up merely demonstrating,"<sup>54</sup> it is important to note that such concerns were shared by Stanislavski, who also loathed cliché and demonstration. This is apparent in his three hierarchical categories of acting, which he identified as "craftsmanship", "representation" and "experiencing." Although the second of Stanislavski's categories, "representation," earns more approval from him than "craftsmanship," its tendency to fixate on the personality of the actor rather than the actual play, and the abandonment, during performance, of the discoveries of the imagination in rehearsal, also limits the effectiveness of this approach.

When it comes to "experiencing," however, the third and most favored of Stanislavski's categories, the similarities with Donnellan's approach become highly visible. For instance, when discussing the difference in register between text and action, Donnellan highlights the importance of a third register, when he describes the rehearsal process as "nothing more nor nothing less than the chase for the living moment."<sup>55</sup>

If we situate this observation alongside Stanislavski's belief that, through a process of experiencing, actors capture "the life of the human spirit of the role,"<sup>56</sup> we can begin to see the extent of Stanislavski's influence on Donnellan's practice.<sup>57</sup> Donnellan writes of the imagination: "It is only the imagination that can connect us to reality," and "the actor's senses and imagination open a lens upon an endless universe."<sup>58</sup> His insistence on spontaneity – "the performance that seems unspontaneous seems dead"<sup>59</sup> – serves to echo many of Stanislavski's key tenets, an idea that is further reinforced by his comments relating to the importance of the

senses.<sup>60</sup> This awareness of the importance of sensory detail in his work recalls Stanislavski's conviction that "sensory concentration" is particularly necessary and particularly valuable to us when establishing the "life of the human spirit in a role."<sup>61</sup>

So where does this leave us when it comes to understanding Donnellan's seemingly un-Stanislavskian position on the notion of character transformation? A potential clue may be found in Donnellan's reference to those forms of theatre in which a dependence on technique need not be a barrier to the levels of spontaneity and liveness that he seeks in rehearsal and performance:

The Noh actor in Japan may take decades to perfect a single gesture, as the ballerina will sweat years developing feats of muscular control. But all the Noh master's virtuosity will go for little if his ornate technique reveals nothing but ornate technique. This highly controlled art must appear, in some way, spontaneous [...] in the surge of life that makes that technique seem invisible [...].<sup>62</sup>

If we accept the logic of this statement and concede that developed technique, providing it is invisible, need not be an obstacle to spontaneity or "the surge of life," then it becomes possible to reassess Donnellan's reservations about transformation and view them as a response to the failure of technique alone, rather than a deficiency in Stanislavski's System. Indeed, like Donnellan, Stanislavski balked at the notion of character transformation that is not rooted in the personality of the actor.<sup>63</sup> For example, Torstov's irritated feedback to one of his students following an attempt to characterize an old man: "That kind of physical characterizing doesn't transform you, it's a complete giveaway and provides a pretext for posturing."<sup>64</sup>

The interplay between the inner and outer realms of experience, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the text and the subtext, help to define Stanislavski's notion of character. Although the terminology may differ, Donnellan's use of binary concepts – the *visible/invisible* processes of rehearsal, research and performance – and the dynamism of his *identity/un-identity* model of interpretation seem similar. These are exemplified in his analysis of Shakespeare's Othello or Chekhov's Arkadina, as well as his discussion of the interpretative power of mask-work – all highlighting clear similarities between his own approach and that of Stanislavski.<sup>65</sup>



Indeed, it is Donnellan's reference to the use of mask that brings him closest to a Stanislavskian understanding of character. Consider, for instance, Donnellan's description of mask-work: "What probably happens is that the mask acts as a trigger to a partially hidden or entirely unknown part of the actor."<sup>66</sup> The similarity to Stanislavski's description is noteworthy: "Characterization is the *mask*, which hides the actor-human being. When we are masked we can reveal the most intimate and spicy details about ourselves."<sup>67</sup>

Donnellan has found ways of absorbing and adapting those aspects of Stanislavski's work that he feels are of most benefit to the actor. His focus on the importance of truth, the imagination, the senses, the need for spontaneity and the life of the spirit, as well as his disavowal of cliché and any form of mannered acting, all resonate very strongly with the principles on which Stanislavski's life work was based. Donnellan's tacit acknowledgment of the importance of embodied, but invisible, technique in other theatre forms and his recognition of the transformative power of mask-work suggests that it may not be character transformation *per se* that he resists, but rather the reductive ideas and externalized techniques that ultimately stifle genuine spontaneity. These prohibit any opportunity for the actor to achieve the "miraculous but realisable task of seeing and moving through the space."<sup>68</sup>

### **Emotions and experimentation**

While, in the cases of both Declan Donnellan and Max Stafford-Clark, the influence of Stanislavski, though always inherent, tends to be somewhat understated, the reverse is true of Katie Mitchell. Renowned for her rigorous application of Stanislavskian approach, which she has applied to Classical Greek drama as well as to more contemporary postdramatic texts, Mitchell is unequivocal in her endorsement of and commitment to the methods he developed and explains:

You can use Stanislavsky's techniques regardless of the style or genre of play or project you are working on. I have used them when working on Greek plays like *Iphigenia at Aulis*, new plays like Kevin Elyot's *Forty Winks*, abstract plays such as Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* or Samuel Beckett's *Footfalls*, and even operas.<sup>69</sup>

Notwithstanding her advocacy of the techniques Stanislavski developed, it is important to state at the outset that there is no sense in which Mitchell could be described as a Stanislavskian fundamentalist. Indeed, rather than simply replicate his approach, she has consistently sought to refine and adapt his work in accordance with the demands of different genres and dramatic traditions. “I think its advantage is that it gives an initial shared language to the actors and the directors and provides a place to start from. Then, as rehearsals continue, you can develop a more individualised system or method of work.”<sup>70</sup>

Starting her professional theatrical career in a clerical role at the King’s Head, in Islington, Mitchell quickly progressed to the role of assistant director, initially with Pip Broughton at Paines Plough, and later at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). In 1989, having been awarded a bursary by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, she travelled to Eastern Europe to observe and study directing in Poland, Russia, Georgia, and Lithuania. During this period, Mitchell was introduced “to the almost scientific discipline of Stanislavsky’s legacy.”<sup>71</sup> Her teachers included Lev Dodin, Director of the St Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy and later Artistic Director of the Maly Drama Theatre, Anatoli Vassiliev, Director of the Moscow’s Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS), as well as acting teachers Tatiana Olear and Elen Bowman. Vassiliev and Bowman can claim a third-generation connection to Stanislavski himself via his student, Maria Knebel. The sense of lineage is important to Mitchell, in that it “made her feel part of a chain of practitioners, each sharpening tried-and-tested tools against their culture and time.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1990, Mitchell established her own theatre company, Classics on a Shoestring, where her productions included *Arden of Faversham* in 1990, *Women of Troy* in 1991, and John Arden’s *Live Like Pigs* in 1993. Known for her versatility and eclectic taste, she has directed for the RSC, the Royal Court, the Young Vic, the National Theatre, and English National Opera. Like Donnellan, she has won much critical acclaim in Europe, where she has directed at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Avignon Festival, the Berlin State Opera, the Burgtheatre in Vienna, and the Schauspiel Köln Theatre in Cologne. In 1996, she won the Evening Standard Best Director award for production of Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame*, and in 2009, she was awarded an OBE for Services to Drama.

In common with both Stafford-Clark and Donnellan, Mitchell has a particular passion for text-based drama, which she has describes as “freedom within form.”

If I wasn't involved in theatre I would be an archaeologist or an anthropologist. I love the idea of starting with a text that I know very shallowly and spending hours and hours digging deeper and deeper into it, opening lots of doors into its possible meanings. I love that process intellectually and emotionally. I love the preparation and I love the work with the actors.<sup>73</sup>

This fascination with the text and the preparatory work that informs it is one of the defining features of her work as a director. Like Stafford-Clark, Mitchell devotes considerable amounts of time to “table-work,” both by herself and with the actors, exploring and analyzing the text. This kind of work is designed to explore the “deep structures underneath the text,” the moment-by-moment “events” and changes that take place in the play, as well as the thematic content. Importantly, Mitchell’s emphasis on text work stops short of becoming overly cerebral. Indeed, it was actually her sensitivity to this possibility that, in part, prompted her to undertake her European study tours. Dan Rebellato quotes Mitchell observations about Dodin and his company: “ ‘They didn’t see performance as being about text; they saw it as being about *behaviour*. And that emphasis was so profoundly different from the tradition from here.’ ”<sup>74</sup>

Mitchell, like Donnellan, adopts a behaviourist approach to directing in which the textual and sub-textual impulses and objectives are embodied and communicated between actors: “It is the exchange of something living between characters on stage that produces the most interesting theatre.”<sup>75</sup> In contrast to Donnellan, however – who is resistant to the notion of “rules,” preferring a much freer, intuitive approach to rehearsal – Mitchell adopts a rigorous methodology that is strongly influenced by the continuity of the lineages and traditions that she has encountered during her European study trips. She explains: “Bit by bit, it’s like I homed in and refined my own practice in response to what people who have direct contact with Russian practice were teaching me and then I constructed my own efficient way of doing it that suited me.”<sup>76</sup>

Alongside close analysis of the text, Mitchell also examines dramatic structure, character history and the socio-political dynamics of the world in which the action is set. Such activity involves actors undertaking specific research tasks and gathering of relevant information that will later serve to inform rehearsals.

Information of this kind is shared among the company, so ensemble knowledge and a common understanding is established early on.

Like Stafford-Clark, Mitchell spends considerable amounts of time allowing the actors to improvise and explore ideas emerging from the world of the play. In the early stages, this will tend to involve “slice of life” presentations in which actors work collaboratively to dramatize and present details from their own lives that are analogous to events taken from the play. Aside from nurturing an ensemble ethos, work of this kind is designed to facilitate a meaningful and personalized relationship to the characters in the play. Mitchell’s close observation of the connections between the actors’ physical exchange and the words/phrases that are used in communication helps her to learn from and guide the performers as rehearsals develop.

Indeed, much of her early work in rehearsal, prior to commencing work on character, sets out to explore the dynamic relationship between the emotions and the body. Wary of the tendency to get caught up in psychological analysis, she prefers to focus on the physical behaviour of the actors she is observing. For Mitchell, “the body is one of the main means by which the audience ‘read’ emotions – and understand what is going on inside a person.”<sup>77</sup>

Mitchell’s emphasis on the importance of the actor’s physicality as a primary means of expression owes much to Stanislavski’s “Method of Physical Actions.” During a research project that she undertook in 2003, funded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, Mitchell read William James’s 1884 essay, ‘What Is an Emotion?’, which is known to have influenced the phase of Stanislavski’s work from which his “Method of Physical Actions” emerged. Importantly, James suggests that when faced with extreme situations, our initial reaction is physical rather than intellectual. James explains: “My thesis on the contrary is that *the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.*”<sup>78</sup>

Drawn to the idea that emotions are physical responses rather than intellectual processes, Mitchell went on to explore the work of Portuguese neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio, who also posits the idea that “an emotion consists primarily of a visible change in the body.”<sup>79</sup> His work suggests that there is a gap of approximately half a second between the physical response to an extreme situation and the conscious realization of what is happening. That is to say, by the time we have become

conscious of some physical danger, for instance, we have already started running away.

Mitchell's explorations of new ways of working have drawn on Damasio's hypothesis and applied his theories to her rehearsal process. Paying extremely close attention to external behaviours such as facial expressions, posture, bodily gestures, and vocal tone, Mitchell strives to ensure that actors physicalize as accurately as possible the emotions generated by the world of the play and the characters represented. Sensitive to the realization that a part of the function of the brain is designed to read and respond to emotions that are expressed through the physical behaviours of others, she has become extremely conscious of how the audience engages with her work: "As a result of these discoveries my relationship to the audience radically changed. It was no longer essential for the actors to feel the emotions [...] What was essential was that the actors replicated them precisely with their bodies. The physiology of emotions replaced psychology as my key point of reference for talking about – and working on – acting."<sup>80</sup>

The impact of this approach to her work is often evidenced by the extremely intense forms of realism and gritty expressions of emotion that typify many of her productions. This can be seen in Michael Billington's review of the Euripides tragedy *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which Mitchell directed at the National Theatre in 2004.

What Mitchell never loses sight of is the emotional reality of the situation or the panicky imperatives of war. Ben Daniels's Agamemnon seeks to hide his moral confusion under meaningless activity. Kate Duchene's Clytemnestra, pushing the baby Orestes in a pram, declines from grandiose queen to vindictive animal. Justin Salinger wittily shows the vain Achilles dwindling into a slithery opportunist. And Hattie Morahan's Iphigenia is a nervily curious girl who finally embraces the pragmatic necessity of death.<sup>81</sup>

Mitchell's book, *Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, is essentially a practical manual that gathers together and describes the various techniques and exercises that she has either observed or developed during the course of her career. In common with descriptions by Stafford-Clark and Donnellan, her writing is focused on working with actors and the journey from rehearsal to performance, but she also

extends her focus to include discussion of elements such as set and costume design, as well as lighting, sound, and music effects.

Extremely detailed and highly practical, the book offers a step-by-step guide to the director's craft and Stanislavski's influence on her work is immediately detectable in the sections relating to the importance of research, the back history of the play, character biographies, visualization, character tempo, and improvisations. She is an unapologetic proponent of Stanislavskian technique: "His work remains relevant whenever you find yourself directing a play containing characters who are members of the human race."<sup>82</sup> Crucially Mitchell has consistently sought to refine and adapt the System in order to meet the contemporary contexts in which her own work is situated: "Liberating yourself from a notion of Stanislavsky's work as a fixed, immovable system will help you use what he has to offer more effectively."<sup>83</sup> Her work on behaviourism and emotion, which she describes as the "biology of emotions," is an excellent example of this flexible yet scientifically based adaptation of Stanislavski's work.

During the last decade or so, Mitchell has begun to experiment with and include various forms of technology in her stage productions. A notable example of this kind of approach is her adaptation of Virginia Woolf's highly poetic novel, *The Waves*, staged at the National Theatre in 2006. By incorporating and blending vivid on-stage projections, simultaneous filming and playback technology, dance performance, live and recorded musical accompaniment, and a cacophony of sound effects, Mitchell sought new ways to invigorate and animate the experience of theatrical performance for a contemporary audience. She recalls:

We started using video like this when we did Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and we were trying to find a form, actually, which could communicate a novel which was entirely made up of internal monologues, which are just thoughts inside people's heads. So we realised we couldn't do that as spoken word, we'd have to use some other tool; so we looked to video, close-ups and the voice-over. And from that we evolved a way of shooting and combining that shooting with live performance.<sup>84</sup>

Experiments with mediatized and digital technology – the displaced imagery, the reflexive narratives, the shifting energies and tones – has fostered the emergence

in Mitchell's work of a range of visual and aural motifs that are well suited to the representation of fractured, multiple notions of self-hood that are a common feature of postdramatic theatre. Her 2007 production, for instance, of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*, at the National Theatre, clearly demonstrated this. Subtitled *Seventeen Scenarios for Theatre*, the text offers various perspectives on the strangely illusive and polymorphous figure of Anne, whose identity is constantly shifting and evolving through various traces, which are revealed during the course of the performance. Is she an artist, a terrorist, a porn star, or a car? Is she none of these things, or a combination of all of them? For a play that rejects the notion of stable and knowable identity in favor of the complex, heterogeneous nature of lived experience, Mitchell's developing use of technology seemed ideal – a view supported by an extract from a review of the production. Andrew Haydon writes:

It is rare to see so many outstanding performances in what is ostensibly an ensemble piece; almost every actor shines. [...] The scene changes, controlled by an abrupt alarm siren, suggesting performers suddenly forced to improvise their way through telling each portion of the script. Each scene seems to begin with its first speaker off-camera, lost on the stage and having to start unexpectedly, as if caught unawares, but knowing that once started they must continue.<sup>85</sup>

Whereas for many contemporary theatre directors, experiments with fragmented texts and digital innovation represent a desire to move away from more traditional modes of representation – especially those associated with Stanislavskian realism – this is not true of Katie Mitchell. For her, the use of multi-media technologies in performance allows for an intensification of the representation of human feelings and experiences rather than a diminution of them.

For both *Waves* and *Attempts on Her Life*, Mitchell collaborated with filmmaker Leo Warner, Creative Director of Edinburgh-based media company 59 Productions. In recent years, their ongoing creative partnership has nurtured the development of what is now referred to as “live cinema.”<sup>86</sup> Notable productions have included *Forbidden Zone* (Salzburg Festival, 2014), *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Schaubühne Berlin, 2013), and *Miss Julie* (Schaubühne Berlin, 2010). Weaving together the arts of theatre and cinema, these works introduce a new sense of

immediacy and tension to performance. It isn't just the performance itself that fascinates, but also the processes by which it is created: the cameras, the lighting, the sound, the live musicians, as well as the occasional mishaps. As always, for Mitchell, attention to detail is of primary importance, as is suggested by the following review of *Miss Julie*:

It's a rigorous and highly technical account of Strindberg's play that is nevertheless soulful, attentive to small gestures in a way that feels achingly precise. Directors Katie Mitchell and Leo Warner have blended camera technology with theatre, creating a peculiar intimacy. Everything seems deeply charged, and even the buttoning of a shirt resembles an act of religious significance [...] Characters were now to be examined as if they had been grown in a Petri dish and were being looked at under a microscope.<sup>87</sup>

In the United Kingdom, Mitchell's work has often attracted harsh criticism. For instance, Michael Billington, of *The Guardian*, has described her as "an auteur whose signature is on every moment of a production"; Nicholas De Jongh, of the *Evening Standard*, has accused her of doing "big damage" to Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*; and Charles Spencer, of *The Telegraph*, suggests that she specializes in "smashing up the classics."<sup>88</sup>

In recent years, Mitchell has tended to work mainly in Europe, enjoying particular success in Germany and Austria, where her work is extremely well received by critics and audiences alike. Philip Oltermann accounts for her success in Germany as follows: "One explanation for Mitchell's continental success is that she has always aspired to the German ideal of *Regietheatre*, which prioritises the director's interpretation over the writer's intention. 'In Germany, we aren't thrown by directors who are irreverent towards the original material', Peter Laudenbach, theatre critic for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, says. 'It's commonplace now.'"<sup>89</sup>

While the question of whether or not she is an "auteur" is debateable and subject to speculation and argument, Mitchell's commitment to and development of the techniques developed by Stanislavski is beyond doubt. Her painstaking attention to detail in research and rehearsal; her use of improvisation as a means to enable each actor to enter the world of the play and inhabit their character's persona; her desire to unpick and examine the minutiae of human interaction and behaviour – are all these



traits and qualities that she has in common with Stanislavski. In recent years, her experiments with the “biology of emotions” and the physicality of emotional expression have had a significant impact on her work. Charlotte Higgins writes: “Her actors convey a sense of minutely observed, psychologically accurate naturalism. In her shows, actors do not declaim: if they are anxious or frightened, they stumble anxiously or fearfully over their words, to the detriment, sometimes, of audibility. That fear or anxiety, too, is strongly embodied: physical language does much of the work.”<sup>90</sup>

In common with Stanislavski, Mitchell is also extremely exacting when it comes to working with actors, but also like him, her understanding of the craft earns her genuine respect from performers.<sup>91</sup>

Whether applied to Classical Greek and Shakespearean theatre, to politically motivated new writing, to verbatim theatre, or to live cinema, the detail and rigor of Stanislavski’s approach, his remarkable understanding of theatre art, and his curious and inquiring spirit mean that very few, if any, of his ideas can be dismissed as irrelevant. We may choose consciously or otherwise to adapt and reinvent some of his techniques, or even to dispense with them entirely, but as long as we continue to value theatre forms that seek to represent carefully observed, truthful reflections of the “life of the human spirit,” it would indeed be foolhardy to ignore the dynamic vibrancy and relevance of a methodological approach to theatre-making that remains as cogent now as when it was originally conceived. Moreover, if the time comes when we decide that Stanislavski’s work is no longer useful to the kinds of theatre that we wish to create, even then we could do considerably worse than to follow his advice: “Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”<sup>92</sup>

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bella Merlin, *The Complete Stanislavski Toolkit* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include: N. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1954) and more recently, A. Migliarisi, *Stanislavsky and Directing: Theory, Practice and Influence* (Ontario: Legas Publishing, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Vasily Osipovich Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, trans. and intro. Jean Benedetti (London: Methuen Drama, 2008), 109.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in P. Roberts and Max Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), 21.

- 
- <sup>5</sup> Other productions of new works included: Ron Hutchinson's *Rat in the Skill* in 1984, Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* in 1988 and *Three Birds Alighting on a Field* in 1991, Howard Brenton's *Bloody Poetry* in 1988 and Claire McIntyre's *My Heart's a Suitcase* in 1990. Further notable productions during this period were his celebrated revivals: Edward Bond's *The Pope's Wedding* (1962) in 1984, and George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) in 1988.
- <sup>6</sup> Maria Shevtsova and Christopher Innes, *Directors/Directing: Conversations on Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 238.
- <sup>7</sup> Shevtsova and Innes, *Directors/Directing*, 238.
- <sup>8</sup> Other productions by Stafford-Clark include *The Libertine* by Stephen Jeffreys in 1994, and by Mark Ravenhill both *Shopping and Fucking* in 1996 and *Some Explicit Polaroids* in 1999.
- <sup>9</sup> Each of these companies enjoyed the luxury of recruiting a permanent ensemble of actors that benefited from prolonged periods of training and rehearsal.
- <sup>10</sup> Max Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George: A Director's Handbook of Techniques* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2012 [1989]), 4.
- <sup>11</sup> Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George*, 95.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Roberts and Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock*, 40.
- <sup>14</sup> Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George*, 24.
- <sup>15</sup> Roberts and Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock*, 30.
- <sup>16</sup> During workshop sessions for *Our Country's Good*, for instance, Stafford-Clark made extensive use of Roy Porter's *English Society in the 18th Century* (1982) and Henry Mayhew's volumes entitled *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851).
- <sup>17</sup> Roberts and Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock*, 151.
- <sup>18</sup> Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George*, 69.
- <sup>19</sup> Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, trans. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008), 237.
- <sup>20</sup> Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George*, 70.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.
- <sup>22</sup> Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, 16.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>24</sup> See Bella Merlin, 'Acting Hare: *The Permanent Way*', in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*, ed. R. Boon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125.
- <sup>25</sup> Bella Merlin, 'The Permanent Way and the Impermanent Muse', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 17.1, no. 1 (2007): 43.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> For example, see Tom Cantrell's article 'Playing for Real in Max Stafford-Clark's *Talking to Terrorists*', in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 31, no. 2 (2011): 167–79.
- <sup>28</sup> Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work on a Role*, trans. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2010), 96.
- <sup>29</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 54.
- <sup>30</sup> Richard Eyre, 'Speech Impediments', *The Guardian*, 21 February 2004. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/feb/21/theatre> (accessed 10 August 2016).
- <sup>31</sup> Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George*, 66.
- <sup>32</sup> At the National Theatre, Donnellan directed Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* in 1990, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* in 1992, and Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* in 1993. At the RSC, he directed *The School for Scandal* in 1999 and *King Lear* in 2002.
- <sup>33</sup> Laurence Olivier Awards include: Most Promising Newcomer (1986), Director of the Year (1987), Outstanding Achievement (1990), Best Revival (1995), Best Director (1995). Other awards include: Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2004) and, most recently, the Golden Lion of Venice for Lifetime Achievement (2016).
- <sup>34</sup> Declan Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', in *On Directing: Interviews with Directors*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi and Mary Luckhurst (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 22.

- 
- <sup>35</sup> Donnellan, *On Directing*, 21.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>37</sup> Jonathan Pitches, 'Conclusion: A Common Theatre History? The Russian Tradition in Britain Today: Declan Donnellan, Katie Mitchell and Michael Boyd', in, *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, edited by Jonathan Pitches (London: Routledge, 2012), 192–209, 198.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with the author, 26 July 2016, and ensuing quotes.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', 23.
- <sup>42</sup> Interview with the author, 26 July 2016.
- <sup>43</sup> Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', 20.
- <sup>44</sup> Interview with the author, 26 July 2016.
- <sup>45</sup> Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', 22.
- <sup>46</sup> Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2005 [2002]), 17.
- <sup>47</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 77.
- <sup>48</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 535.
- <sup>49</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 84; Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 535.
- <sup>50</sup> Quoted in Sharon M. Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus* (London and New York: Routledge 2009), 77.
- <sup>51</sup> A fuller discussion of the difference in emphasis appears in David Shirley, 'Stanislavski's Passage into the British Conservatoire', in *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, ed. Jonathan Pitches (London: Routledge, 2012), 38–61.
- <sup>52</sup> Vladimir Mirodan, 'Lying Bodies, Lying Faces: Deception and the Stanislavskian Tradition of Character', in *Stanislavski Studies* 4, no. 11 (2016): 35 (*italics in original*).
- <sup>53</sup> Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', 20.
- <sup>54</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 82.
- <sup>55</sup> Quoted in Aleks Sierz, 'Declan Donnellan and Cheek by Jowl: "To Protect the Acting"', in *Contemporary European Theatre Directors*, ed. Maria Delgado and Dan Rebellato (London: Routledge, 2010), 158.
- <sup>56</sup> Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, 139.
- <sup>57</sup> A fuller discussion of each of Stanislavski's categories can be found in Chapter Seven of Carnicke's *Stanislavsky in Focus*.
- <sup>58</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 9, 82.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>61</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 111.
- <sup>62</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 2–3.
- <sup>63</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 519.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.
- <sup>65</sup> A fuller discussion of all of these techniques can be found in Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 98–122.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.
- <sup>67</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 535.
- <sup>68</sup> Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target*, 83.
- <sup>69</sup> Katie Mitchell, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2009) 227.
- <sup>70</sup> Katie Mitchell, 'Katie Mitchell', in *On Directing: Interviews with Directors*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi and Mary Luckhurst (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 102.
- <sup>71</sup> Mitchell, *The Director's Craft*, 227.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.
- <sup>73</sup> Mitchell, 'Katie Mitchell', 96.

- 
- <sup>74</sup> Dan Rebellato, 'Katie Mitchell: Learning From Europe', in *Contemporary European Theatre Directors*, ed. Maria Delgado and Dan Rebellato (London: Routledge, 2010), 320–1.
- <sup>75</sup> Donnellan, 'Declan Donnellan', 97.
- <sup>76</sup> Quoted in Pitches, *Russians in Britain*, 201.
- <sup>77</sup> Mitchell, *The Director's Craft*, 155.
- <sup>78</sup> William James, 'What Is an Emotion?', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 405 (italics in original).
- <sup>79</sup> Mitchell, *The Director's Craft*, 231.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., 232.
- <sup>81</sup> Michael Billington, 'Review of *Iphigenia at Aulis*', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2004. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/jun/23/theatre> (accessed 26 August 2016).
- <sup>82</sup> Mitchell, *The Director's Craft*, 227.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., 226.
- <sup>84</sup> Interview with Mark Kermode presented on *The Culture Show*, BBC 2, 29 July 2008. Available online: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/cultureshow/videos/2008/07/s5\\_e9\\_mitchell/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cultureshow/videos/2008/07/s5_e9_mitchell/) (accessed 26 August 2016).
- <sup>85</sup> Andrew Haydon, 'Review of *Attempts on Her Life*', *Culture Wars*, 20 March 2007. Available online: <http://www.culturewars.org.uk/2007-03/attempts.htm> (accessed 15 August 2016).
- <sup>86</sup> Philip Oltermann interviewing Katie Mitchell in *The Guardian* has defined "live cinema" as "performances that come alive somewhere between the chaotic scramble on stage and the smooth, cinema-quality output on the screen." *The Guardian*, 9 July 2014. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jul/09/katie-mitchell-british-theatre-true-auteur> (accessed 1 August 2016).
- <sup>87</sup> Review of *Fräulein Julie* published in *The Evening Standard*, 1 May 2013. Available online: <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/fr-ulein-julie-barbican-theatre-theatre-review-8598500.html> (accessed 7 August 2016).
- <sup>88</sup> Links to the reviews of each critic are included below and were accessed on 18 August 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/nov/29/theatre.euripides> (Michael Billington); <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/this-seagull-is-birdbrained-7387461.html> (Nicholas De Jongh); <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3669609/Women-of-Troy-Euripides-all-roughed-up.html> (Charles Spencer).
- <sup>89</sup> Oltermann, 'Katie Mitchell, British Theatre's True Auteur'.
- <sup>90</sup> Charlotte Higgins, 'Katie Mitchell, British Theatre Queen in Exile', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/14/british-theatre-queen-exile-katie-mitchell> (accessed 25 August 2016).
- <sup>91</sup> For example, Benedict Cumberbatch's comments on working with Mitchell, in Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Sonia Moore, *The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor* (Penguin Books, 1984), quoting Josha Logan, 'Foreword'.